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Freeburg, Sage Alexandra

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Dreaming Through Snow: The Arctic Imaginary in Nineteenth Century European Literature

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Master of Arts  
in Comparative Literature

by

Sage Alexandra Freeburg

Committee in charge:

Professor Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, Chair

Professor Renan Larue

Professor Eric Prieto

June 2020

The thesis of Sage Alexandra Freeburg is approved.

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Renan Larue

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Eric Prieto

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Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, Committee Chair

May 2020

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by

Sage Alexandra Freeburg

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In respect of the Arctic and the deep gratitude that I hold for all the friends, family, animals, and elements who nurtured my love of this space.

## ABSTRACT

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by

Sage Alexandra Freeburg

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate mastery within the field of Literature and the Environment and the French-language literature on this subject. I have selected texts that best demonstrate both the general and more specific theories expressed by scholars of Literature and the Environment in both the English and French traditions. For example, I explore concepts related to ecocriticism, aesthetics, feminist studies, postcolonial studies, and animal studies. I discuss each of these themes as they fit into the field of Literature and the Environment, and more specifically as they relate to the topic of my paper. Using theories of Literature and the Environment, my paper explores the construction of the Arctic imaginary in early and mid-nineteenth century British and French fiction. Specifically, I argue that Arctic-inspired fiction during this time utilized the imaginary in its creation of Arctic wilderness to grapple with the unfamiliarity of the space and the difficulty of accurate representation in European aesthetic codes. I support this argument with two sections, one on wilderness and one on the myths and figures transported into Arctic space. Both sections implement theories of Literature and the Environment and critical theory on Arctic space to support my claims. To make these claims, I specifically refer to the following works: *The Captain of the Polestar* by Arthur Conan Doyle, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *Laura: Voyage dans le cristal* by George Sand, and *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* by

Jules Verne. This paper fits into my larger interest in Literature and the Environment, Arctic Studies, and Nineteenth Century Fiction. To satisfy the exam requirements, this paper exists in the form of a fifty-page essay.

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## I. Preface

For those yet to witness for themselves, the Arctic is a place that exists mainly in the imagination. While the Arctic as a region can be seen, felt, and heard, for many people the experience of the Arctic remains within the imaginary. Not because it sits atop the world, not because it is the “ends of the earth” as Hester Blum has deemed it, but because there is simply a different temporal time that exists here. As Barry Lopez notes in *Arctic Dreams*, we cannot compare the fleeting twilight experienced in more southern latitudes to the slow twilight of the Arctic, of which there are different kinds depending on the time of day (23). In the summer and winter months, one cannot rely on the metronome of day and night to pass time in the perpetual sunshine or moonlight. The difference in time that one encounters in the Arctic is simply so distinctive that new language must be created when conversing in tongues evolved from more southerly regions. This can make the Arctic difficult to represent accurately in those languages not accustomed to the place. In saying this, I do not intend to romanticize the Arctic or imply that it is somehow “otherworldly.” In fact, it is the very act of this essay to deconstruct these inclinations. But we must admit that within the “language codes and artistic conventions” (David 12) of European-based languages and cultures, there is simply a lack of experience adequate to describe these types of temporal encounters. My favorite example is the superior mirages that run rampant in the Arctic. These tricks of light occur due to flat tundra and abundant sea coupled with temperature inversions. The result: a horizon of floating ships, shadows of snowshoe hares elongated to the size of polar bears, and the ability to see images that appear below the horizon line.

I have given many years to this space. I have lived here long enough for the unfamiliar to become familiar and yet I still find it difficult to describe in any accuracy. This is a result partly of visibility. It is, simply, difficult to *see*. Light plays tricks here in a way

that shadows can be disguised as moose and moose as shadows. Despite my keen observation, I have quite literally run into wolves because winter-twilight mutes color distinctions. Even moving beyond visual cues, the Arctic tricks the body's own sense-perception. The winter nights might be lovely, dark, and deep but nothing can compare to the entrenched agitation felt by a circadian system when it has been daylight for five weeks and your body simply can't sleep. Sense perception, then, is altered and it is difficult to find the words to describe these experiences in any accuracy.

I include these short reflections as a testimony of my personal experience in the difficulty of describing this place. Unlike many of the travelers we will look at, I had the chance to call the Arctic home. Not only mine, but my maternal family has called rural Alaska and its sub-Arctic regions home for generations—I have familial stories that sound more like sublime myth than family lore. This is all to say that the difficulty of translating the Arctic into a place easily imagined, without falling prey to Romantic “imaginings” or inaccurate descriptions is a task proven difficult throughout its colonial history. It is a task complicated by a lack of visual and verbal rhetoric that has turned the Arctic from a home, an ecosystem, a place situated within the same earthly plane as every other landmass on earth, into an imaginary—a place that exists but is mediated through rhetoric and alluring stories of Romanticism. To acknowledge the Arctic as seen in the Western tradition today is to acknowledge a place constructed in media portrayals, travel narratives, memoirs, fiction, most recently in scientific data points and specimen collection. Even literature on the subject is full of reveries. Barry Lopez published *Arctic Dreams* (1986), Robert McGee wrote *The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World* (2005), and we have already mentioned Hester Blum's *The News at the Ends of the Earth* (2019). Every direction we turn, we cannot escape the unreality of Arctic space. While my own experiences are

squarely situated in the present, the task at hand is to go back to the height of European Arctic construction, to understand where these Romantic imaginings arose and why this might be the case. My hope is that in acknowledging the construction of the Arctic as an imaginary place, we might begin to see it in its true light.

## **II. Introduction**

While I take fiction as my primary evidence in pursuing this investigation of the Arctic imaginary, cultural and literary criticism related to ecocriticism and environmental literature influences my method and occupies the critical lens through which I examine these works. As one ventures into these critical inquiries, it quickly becomes evident that although work on the environment is often lumped together under the terms of ecocriticism or environmental literature, these groupings are slippery and can refer to vastly different modes of investigation depending on the time period, cultural context, and philosophical leanings of the critic. Stephanie Posthumus includes a nice summary of ecocritical definitions in her book *French Écocritique*. Here, she summarizes them as studies which reference 1. The relationship between literature and the environment, 2. The critical study of texts as they relate to environmental crisis and 3. The study of human and non-human relationships (5) (we could add discourse on environmental justice as a fourth category).

That environmental thought in the humanities has expanded into these categories represents a recent development from the “cult of wilderness” within which environmentalism began (Martínez-Alier 3). As Juan Martínez-Alier summarizes in *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*, environmental philosophy and critical thought stems largely from the “cult of wilderness” that began in the United States during the latter half of the twentieth century. Ecocriticism emerged alongside these conservationist movements and the growing awareness of human

impact on natural systems. In this early iteration, the emphasis was given to Romantic texts and twentieth century American nature writing (Buell 89). Arne Naess' theory of "deep ecology" also influenced these early critical developments, where the human was decentralized and seen as equal to other beings within the biosphere. While the beginnings of ecocriticism are normally regarded as highly Anglophone (Buell 90), the environmental literature movement has since grown to encompass a more globalized perspective within the fields outlined by Posthumus. This also includes environmental justice movements and moves towards theories more aligned with eco-cosmopolitanism, which strives to imagine both human and nonhuman agents as part of an imagined global community while simultaneously recognizing different cultural approaches to nature (Heise 61). In recent years, it seems that we have finally listened to Guattari's argument in *Les trois ecologies*. Following his theories of subjectivity developed in the essay, he calls on us to reexamine established modes of "l'écologie mentale" (in addition to *l'écologie sociale* and *l'écologie environnementale*) in favor of "ouverture" (49). This would reformulate the connotation of ecology, because "La connotation de l'écologie devrait cesser d'être liée à l'image d'une petite minorité d'amoureux de la nature ou de spécialistes attirés" (48). With the expansion of environmental literature towards questions of environmental justice and the acknowledgement of the cultural specificity of environmental concerns, it seems we might finally be on our way.

Comparing environmental literature within the Anglophone and Francophone contexts can help us to engage in a more globalized view of environmental consciousness. While the Anglophone tradition stems from the "cult of wilderness" and certainly retains some of these foundational themes, French environmental thinking occupies a different conceptual zone in forming its *écocritique*. Instead of emerging from a focus on nature

writing, Posthumus argues that French environmental thinking cannot be separated from the lineage of thinkers such as Deleuze, Derrida, and Lacan (“État des lieux de la pensée écocritique français” 148). Because of this, French *écocritique* does not have the singular background of American ecocriticism, which results in more specific groupings of environmental thought instead of calling it all *écocritique*. This background of multiplicity results in more specific critical lens through which critics choose to study. However, Blanc et al. maintain that these views still follow along the main trends of American ecocriticism, as they continue to fall within “un axe politique et un axe poétologique” (18). Another strong current of Francophone investigations into place and space is the demarcation between investigations in “‘geo’ (earth) and ‘eco’ (home)” spaces (Bouvet et al. 1). For example, *géocritique* poses questions regarding the relationship between the creation of space in literature and the real world (Posthumus 21), and an emphasis on developing a “body and mind relationship to the earth” (Bouvet et al. 9). Practices such as this also accentuate the interdisciplinary approach of some French *écocritique*, which as Ruelle (quoted in Posthumus) states encourages questions of a “vue globale sur l’ensemble des activités humaines” (“État des lieux de la pensée écocritique français” 150). (However, American academia seems to be moving more towards these interdisciplinary approaches, demonstrated by publications such as Peter’s *The Marvelous Clouds*.) Another way to approach literature and the environment is through *écopoétique*, which I remain particularly inspired by. The French use of *écopoétique* nicely denotes an area of study which particularly emphasizes aesthetics. As Blanc et al. state “il s’agit de traduire les processus naturels, de les reproduire ou les re-présenter, leur prêter une langue humaine” (21). Essentially, this view looks at ways that nature is rearticulated through art and literature, thereby re-emphasizing the importance of aesthetics in the works and not only the ideas

presented. As Pierre Schoentjes observes, *écopoétique* works better than *écocritique* in a French context because “la spécificité française s’accommode mieux d’un terme qui met moins l’accent sur l’engagement et plus sur la composante proprement littéraire” (qtd. in Posthumus 23). Overall, this view is also characterized as largely based in ecological aesthetics instead of ecological politics (Bouvet et al. 5). This emphasis on aesthetics and not simply the main ideas of a text is what will allow us to ultimately understand how the Arctic imaginary occurs.

Here, I would like to acknowledge my choice to perform a reading through the lens of *écopoétique* rather than a more thematic (or overtly political) approach (a differentiation outlined by Blanc et al). While my proposed reading list for this exam held works representative of both methods, I refer most often to critical works which reinforce concepts of *écopoétique*. This conscious choice reflects the intensity of the Arctic imaginary in nineteenth century conceptions of Arctic space. However, I can imagine additional sections or projects that would branch more into the realm of the environmental-political, reflecting upon the impact of the Arctic imaginary. As Éric Glon acknowledges, the early ideologies and identities of the colonists in North America and its sub-Arctic regions are still felt and “C’est dans cette appropriation que se forment des valeurs qui s’inspirent directement de la culture d’origine des colons” (242). In investigating this continued history, we could develop a more accurate representation of Arctic space. For example, it would be fruitful to use the works of critics who engage more fully in discussions of the Anthropocene, such as Haraway, Latour, Chakrabarty, and Ghosh, to form a continuing history of this perspective. This could lead to an important discussion on the removal of bodies and substance from the Arctic, including indigenous bodies, whales, and petroleum, resulting the Arctic “being made blank” and the apparent emptiness that explorers encountered in the seas and land

throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> A project such as this would fit more comfortably with efforts to decolonize spaces and leave room for an Arctic informed by Glissant's concept of relational identity, thereby acknowledging the various identities and histories of Arctic space and demonstrating a process of "donne-avec" (158). However, our investigation of the Arctic imaginary in nineteenth century European literature reveals a singular perspective on the Arctic and demonstrates the power of Glissant's *identité-racine*. Here, identity is discrete and "est préservée, par la projection sur d'autres territoires qu'il devient légitime de conquérir" (158). The shift would emphasize a global society encouraged by variation and fluctuation, rather than attempting to externally impose culturally specific ideologies. This is certainly the case in the Arctic imaginary, as European identity took over the Arctic to such an extent that the space became more a space of legend than an accurate representation.

To explore the Arctic imaginary, the following essay will therefore offer a brief introduction to Arctic history as a conceptual tool within which to place the work of nineteenth century Arctic fiction, and also offer an explanation of the primary sources chosen before moving into an examination of the texts themselves. I have borrowed from both the Anglophone and Francophone traditions to demonstrate the highly constructed representations of Arctic space in nineteenth century English and French fiction. The overall purpose of this essay is to demonstrate what I call the Arctic imaginary within the fictions and historical backgrounds through which the imaginary occurred. This investigation follows other critical remarks on the construction of Arctic space. For example, David states that "That marine and terrestrial environments were so exotic to European eyes, and the climate had such a profound effect upon what was possible, that for those who visited the region the creation of representations, using whatever medium was available, was a constant

challenge” (6). McCorristine has devoted an entire book to the phenomenon of the fantastic in Arctic literature, titled *Spectral Arctic*. McGhee also recognizes this practice, as he remarks that “The British were not alone in creating this make-believe Arctic world. It was an international literary effort . . .” (232). Finally, Haraway argues for an understanding of the world which acknowledges “situated knowledges.” Here, she claims that we must allow awareness of the production of knowledge as it relates to specific identities and situations. In other words, it is important to know “how meaning and bodies get made” (580) and investigate the sources of knowledge, rather than taking these productions as pure truth. Inspired by such claims, I define the Arctic imaginary and an invented, fantastical geographic realm that reflects ideologies of European consciousness instead of accurate representations. These imaginaries are the result of a landscape so unfamiliar that normal artistic conventions could not adequately describe or conceive of such different terrain. In response to this, explorers reported in obscure language which artists and writers then capitalized on to create fantastical, otherworldly scenes of Arctic space. Because the Arctic took on such an imaginary air, it provided a space through which dreams of the European mind could play themselves out on the imaginary blank backdrop of Arctic space, and where Europeans attempted to re-inscribe traces of home into an unfamiliar landscape. The essay thus has two parts: in part one, titled “Wilderness,” I discuss the contribution of early conceptions of wilderness to the formation of the Arctic imaginary, thus applying a more ecocritical approach to the construction of Arctic space. In this section I rely heavily upon theories developed by William Cronon and Mary Louise Pratt regarding wilderness and European colonialism. Part two, “Voids and Dreams,” emphasizes a more Francophone approach and is informed by theories of *écopoétique*. In this section, I look closely at the



primary texts as examples of how European desires informed the Arctic imaginary and repopulated a perceived “blank” landscape with fantastical figures representing these desires.

### *A. A Brief History of the Arctic<sup>ii</sup>*

I would first like to offer a brief contextualization of the space we are about to enter, the Arctic (more specifically the North American Arctic and land masses connected to the Atlantic Ocean). While humans have occupied Arctic space for over 10,000 years, the archeological history shows an abundance of activity starting 5,000 years ago in modern day Alaska (McGhee 155). While archeologists refer to these cultures as Palaeoeskimo, in all reality these cultures share only the same geographical space as Inuit and it is far better to refer to them through the Inuit name, the Tuniit (48). Since then, a number of cultures have occupied this space including the early cultures of the Dorset and the Thule people. Around 1,000 years ago, the Inuit began to move East from Alaska. While the exact reasoning is unknown, archeologists believe that the discovery of iron and other metals in this area facilitated the Eastward movement. At this time (around the thirteenth or fourteenth century AD) signs of the Tuniit who lived in Arctic Canada disappears from the archeologic record. Here, the Inuit established permanent villages and seemed to live for some time prosperously in these settlements (124).

By the time Europeans arrived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these settlements were largely abandoned and replaced by small groups who called themselves Inughuit. It is not known why the settlements were abandoned, but scholars suspect that interest in a growing southerly metal trade coupled with disease outbreaks might have been the cause (125-126). In a summary of McGhee, the image of the Inuit that Europeans propagated was of an isolated people living on the edge of the earth. Instead, Inuit history and the other indigenous cultures of the Arctic established a complex and prosperous history

“that for millennia has linked the peoples and cultures of Asia and America” (129). The world McGhee reveals is not the blank space that European travelers promoted. While it is outside the scope of this paper to tell the complete abundant history of the Arctic, I include this reference as a foundation from which we will build. Europeans have a long history of mystifying the Arctic, and this is a very culturally-specific interpretation. To those that call the Arctic home, the land is navigable, habitable, and not the blank canvas that the European explorers perceived.

Western history seems almost obsessed with mythologizing the Arctic. This practice begins with Greek astronomer and geographer Pytheas, who in 330BCE traveled northwards to a land called Thule where the sun shone even at midnight (23). The Greeks are also known promoters of the myth of an Arctic paradise and the Hyperborean people (the immortal inhabitants of the land), who are referenced in Homer, Hesiod, and Herodotus. Centuries later, the Vikings were the first people hailing from Europe to colonize Arctic land around the Atlantic Ocean. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century Vikings began to move into the lands of Iceland and Greenland, the most famous of which inspired *Eirik the Red's Saga* and whose son, Leif Eiriksson, was the first European to set foot in North America along the southern part of the Labrador coast around 1001 (Vaughn 43). The rest of Europe began to show interest in the Arctic around the early 16<sup>th</sup> century as the continent began its imperialist undertaking. The interest was driven by an attempt to find a Northwest or Northeast passage to facilitate trade routes, but when the Dutch and English won their southern trade routes against the Spanish and Portuguese around 1600, interest in discovering a passage largely dropped off and was not picked up again until the nineteenth century (54). However, interest in the Arctic was not abandoned completely. Seventeenth and eighteenth-century sailors continued to venture into Northern waters near Svalbard on whaling vessels, and the

Hudson's Bay Company and the Royal Greenland Trade continued to facilitate the trade of fur and other goods in the area. Moreover, as Battail notes, there was also an increase of scientific activity in the Arctic Ocean off the European coast.

While there is a rich history of movement in the Arctic in between the centuries when Arctic exploration began, dwindled, and returned with force (including the voyages of Martin Frobisher and Henry Hudson, and the quite frankly fascinating record of Russians and the Eastern Arctic region) I would like to now call our attention to the Arctic in Europe's nineteenth century imagination. It is around this time that the Arctic imaginary developed more robustly. As discussed, the Arctic imaginary refers to the invented and fantastical mixing of real and mythic space within constructions of Arctic space in travel narratives, fiction, and eventually the widely perceived idea of the Arctic itself. While Arctic imaginings made their way throughout Europe during the nineteenth century, many of these mystical accounts can be traced back to the British nationalism promoted by John Barrow, Second Secretary of the Admiralty. In 1818 Barrow published *A Chronological History of Voyages into the Arctic Regions* which sought to influence public readers towards the importance of Arctic travel. Just before its publication, the British Royal Navy sent two expeditions in search of a Northwest Passage and in the preface to his history Barrow explicitly states his aims as related to the public reception of these expeditions.

[A]s many crude and absurd notions seemed to be entertained on the subject [of the expeditions], it was thought that a brief history, arranged in chronological order, of the dangers and difficulties and progressive discoveries of former attempts, might serve as a proper introduction to the narratives of the present voyages, which, whether successful or not, will be expected by the public."

Barrow's goal, then, was to bring the Arctic back into the public imagination. This was not just any Arctic, though. This Arctic was a place where the "explorer emerged as a man challenged to continue an adventure while inscribing British power and its ideals of enterprise and knowledge on an ever-unfinished map of the circumpolar region" (McCorristine 22). Thus, the returning interest in finding the Northwest Passage was more of a nationalistic exercise and project demonstrating Britain's naval strength. However, boundary lines and sea routes were not all that was uncovered in the Arctic. As ships made their way across icy oceans, inner worlds of imagination, desires, and reveries also become clearer. As McCorristine states in the first chapter of his book *Spectral Arctic*, "a base level of religious beliefs, superstitions and taboos continued to inform the everyday thought of whalers and seamen on discovery service" (24). These imaginings were also disseminated through print culture into the larger public space of Europe's readership and persisted the theme of "visions and dreams" which showed "how non-explorers could appropriate their own senses and ideas about the Arctic in the nineteenth century" (29).

As I argue later, these persistent imaginings probably emerged from the sense of blankness that accompanied Arctic thought. The Arctic was seen as a place unsustainable of life, except to the indigenous inhabitants and those few animals that remained throughout the winter. To the European explorers, it was "a lethal and alien environment" where sailors experienced "homesickness that would barter life for the sight of a country garden; and the bleak depression that settles on those whose lives have been reduced to an apparently endless sentence of hard labour in a world of wind and ice" (McGhee 133). It is, therefore, unsurprising that inner desires and dreams, rooted deeply in imaginings of home and European culture, played themselves out on the vast landscape. In another facet of these imaginings, as described by Hester Blum in her new publication *The News at the Ends of the*

*Earth*, polar media was situated outside of time and many of the personal accounts of polar life helped sailors to “work through questions of time, space, and human duration in climatic extremity” (26). Arctic narratives are, therefore, not so much narratives of the Arctic itself but a deep mediation on what it means to be European in a time of expanding global knowledge, climactic extremes, and unpredictability. The Arctic as it was never really did make its way to Europe.

It is therefore the goal of this paper to uncover what the Arctic imaginary consists of and how these ideals of Arctic space can be mapped onto pre-existing and emerging trends of Europe’s self-consciousness during the nineteenth century. While I occasionally reference three nineteenth century Arctic accounts, I include them mainly to contextualize the sorts of popular travel narratives that circulated during this time, and where the beginnings of the Arctic imaginary can be seen: This includes Barrow’s *A Chronological History of Voyages Into the Arctic Regions: Undertaken Chiefly for the Purpose of Discovering a North-East, North-West, Or Polar Passage Between the Atlantic and Pacific*, Franklin’s *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21, and 22*, and Bellot’s *Journal d’un voyage aux mers polaires exécuté à la recherche de Sir John Franklin, en 1851 et 1852*. Using these accounts as examples of what kinds of knowledges were passed into the public imagination, I focus on three works of fiction as examples of how the Arctic imaginary was created in French and British cultures. I refer to Mary Shelley’s original 1818 *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* as an example of how these themes presented themselves in British culture. However, the majority of my attention is given to the French works *Laura: Voyage dans le cristal* by George Sand and *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* by Jules Verne. My emphasis on French texts within this context aims to illustrate the pervasiveness of the Arctic imaginary across Europe, a theme further demonstrated by

Verne's emphasis on and reference to the characters of British expeditions throughout the text, particularly Captain John Ross who inspired Verne's title character, Captain Hatteras (Weber 72).

In fact, Arctic history has an interesting affinity for movement and its magnetism tends to surpass national borders. This a trend Jean-François Battail discusses in his article "L'Appel du Grand Nord. Entre fascination exotique et curiosité scientifique," beginning with the translation of Swedish scientific publications across Europe in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (238). This spark lit the fire under Arctic scientific explorations that fueled the early days of European Arctic exploration and also influenced expeditions such as that undertaken by Maupertuis to explore science in these unfamiliar areas. One reason for this continental fascination with the Far North could be that the Arctic had long existed in Western myth and folklore, making discovery of the place more culturally significant. Another reason could be borrowed from Margaret Cohen and her text *The Novel and the Sea*, where she claims "Genres that travel across space, like genres that endure across time, must be able to address social and/or literary questions that are transportable, that can speak to divergent publics . . . . In the case of nineteenth-century sea fiction, the key to its transportability is its performance of craft." (168). Arctic literature, both travel narratives and fiction, possess not only the shared interest in the sea voyages to which Cohen speaks, but also the transportation of a space seen by few. Cohen argues that the performance of craft allows for this transportable impact, both because it's action is internationally legible and because it offers invented solutions to problems (168). I argue that the creation of the Arctic imaginary resulted in a similar trend. While many travel narratives that arose from Europe's colonial expansion were focused on describing spaces that had been colonized by a nation, (and therefore reinforced national claims) the multi-national interest in finding the Northwest Passage

demonstrates that the Arctic had not yet been nationally colonized in the same rooted force as other southern landscapes. Coupled with the difficulty of actually knowing the land, the Arctic took the space of an imaginary formed through continental contributions, instead of through the lens of the one colonizing nation. It is due to this that the Arctic illustrated its transnational mobility. The interest in Arctic imaginary in France became particularly emphasized in the nineteenth century, due in large part to Jules Verne and his widely popular *roman géographique*. However, the allure of the Arctic also made its way through the literature of *boréalisme* (which we will discuss in the second section) in the poetry of Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire (Briens 155). It is for these reasons that this essay takes the transnational approach of addressing the Arctic imaginary in both French and English literatures.

I specifically choose to look at Verne and Sand for their mutual influence and interest in science. Both amateur naturalists, Verne was a notable member of the *Société de Géographie* for more than thirty years (Dupuy 226), and had significant impact on Sand's work. In a letter Sand wrote to Verne, she addresses this admiration as she states "J'espère que vous nous conduirez bientôt dans les profondeurs de la mer et que vous ferez voyager vos personnages dans ces appareils de plongeurs que votre science et votre imagination peuvent se permettre de perfectionner" (qtd. in Mustière 195-196). The two writers produced works which address similar themes of science and the representation of space, and Verne's *Voyage au centre de la Terre* holds undeniable connections to Sand's *Laura*. In fact, the two novels book-end 1864 (196). While Verne was known for his *roman géographique*, *Laura* occupies the genre of quasi-science-fiction and beautifully moves between dreams and reality (Mercier 207) In the following texts, both writers show

remarkable insight into the realities of Arctic voyages and their impacts on the human condition.

### **III. The Arctic in European Literature**

#### ***A. Wilderness***

The Arctic imaginary and Western theories of wilderness stem from a similar space of attempting to make sense of natural areas. This section is therefore an application, or expansion, of the idea of wilderness as applied not to a preserve or territory, but instead to a specific global region. It is a case study, so to speak, on the impact of these imaginings and a demonstration of persistent ideas of nature. William Cronon's essay "The Trouble with Wilderness or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" serves as the backbone of my thoughts regarding the Arctic imaginary. As he states in the first page of his essay, wilderness is "quite profoundly a human creation" and exists within the specific cultural imagination of Western thought. He traces the history of wilderness as it first emerged with negative connotations in biblical contexts before morphing into the pristine wild we understand today. While we will later discuss Cronon's essay in more detail, I would like to extend this thought into the bulk of my argument to come. Namely, that the edifice of wilderness developed throughout the nineteenth century can also reflect the edifice of the Arctic as presented in nineteenth century literature, a phenomenon that arose from the same impulses but with different outcomes. As we will see, wilderness became a place situated outside the human realm. I argue that in the Arctic, these impulses result in a highly constructed "wilderness" that became scattered with European identity. This merge of identity with wilderness resulted in the highly-constructed, imagined, dream-like conception of the Arctic that was transported back to Europe where it took on a life of its own. The following section thus has three parts: a discussion of Wilderness as it applies both in the Western tradition



and the construction of the Arctic, a discussion of the Arctic imaginary, and the colonial implications of these constructions.

### 1. Wilderness and the Arctic

To fully understand the formation of the Arctic as an imaginary, we must first look to a more generalized topic: wilderness. As Martínez-Alier summarizes, early environmental thought emerged from a “cult of wilderness” whose purpose was to defend pristine nature. The movement evolved from ideologies of wilderness within the same genealogy as John Muir and the Sierra Club, as well as the ‘deep ecology’ movement of the 1980s which focused on more biocentric attitudes. This inaugural view of environmentalism showed influence from conservation biology, religion, and discussions of post-materialism (2-4), however its main focus was preservation of natural environments. Other philosophies on environmental action have grown from this initial trend, including eco-efficiency movements which give attention to the impacts of industrial activities on systems and bodies, and environmental justice movements which recognize “inevitable ecological distribution conflicts” (12) and environmental inequalities across the globe.

These various perspectives on environmental activism demonstrate the complexity of thinking ecologically. While the movements have shared goals, they also challenge each other to expand beyond their primary ambitions and include a diversity of knowledge creation around environmental issues (5, 15). Following Haraway’s assertion of situated knowledges, these areas of overlap encourage deeper investigation into knowledge creation and production surrounding environmental beliefs. Cronon engages with this type of investigation as he investigates assumptions about wilderness space and inspects the cultural-rootedness of this perspective. Rather than accepting the “cult of wilderness” as a

universal truth, Cronon points out that there is a “trouble” with wilderness that we must understand.

The trouble is that wilderness does not inherently exist; the idea of wilderness as an untouched landscape is a culturally-rooted phenomenon. We must acknowledge humans and nature are not separate from one another but instead are fueled by a mutually impactful relationship. In this light, wilderness would not exist without its antithesis of civilization. As Cronon states, wilderness invites the assumption of a place that can be used to escape society. In this construction, nature sits outside human history and outside of human temporal space. It is the “illusion that we can somehow wipe clean the slate of our past and return to the *tabula rasa* that supposedly existed before we began to leave our marks on the world” (10). This separation is a problem because it fuels the story that humans and nature are somehow separated, which invites the following formations: ideas that nature is a resource for humans to exploit, that nature fails to impact humans, and failure to recognize other ways of experiencing human/nature interactions. Other problems result from this dualistic perspective, but we will look more closely at understanding these three implications in particular as they relate most specifically to the view explorers held in the nineteenth century Arctic.

Wilderness fuels the view that nature is a resource for humans to exploit because of the separation between culture and nature it facilitates. If wilderness is a space that exists away from the common dwellings of humans in cities, then it is extraneous to human survival. It is a place of recreation that, if need be, can be sacrificed for the sake of human prosperity. As soon as natural spaces were designated a place where humans were not allowed to live, a place that the individual was no longer expected to rely on, nature became supplementary to human survival. Essentially, the separation places human faculty above all else in the world,

and designates wilderness a place ruled over from afar. Mick Smith speaks to this complication in his 2011 publication *Against Ecological Sovereignty*. Here, he states that wilderness “presumes human dominion and assumes that the natural world is already, before any decision is even made, fundamentally a human resource” (xii). The emphasis on viewing nature as a resource exemplifies that ideas of nature exist only as they relate to the human. This is not surprising, given that in the Western tradition the human is descended directly from God and therefore holds authority over everything else on the earth (Foster 13). Therefore everything, including nature, is less-than-human and can be used for human gains, whether that be the pleasure of walking in a National Park or the extraction of resources. If we agree with Smith’s argument, no matter how the land is used, the very fact that it is given an imposed designation from culture assumes human sovereignty over nature. Nature, therefore, is a resource.

Wilderness also fuels the idea that nature fails to impact humans. While this may appear contrary to the point posed above, the two actually go hand-in-hand. As we have discussed, the root of the nature/culture dichotomy appears in the Western tradition through an assumption that humans are inherently placed above nature through a God-given right. The perspective assumes that humans can exist outside nature and escape its consequences, and it is this inclination that gives way to the idea that humans can harness the natural world. In the latter half the of the nineteenth century, Marx began to challenge this appeal through discussions of metabolic rift and materialism. As John Foster states in his text *Marx’s Ecology*, “Marx employed the concept of a ‘rift’ in the metabolic relation between human beings and the earth to capture the material estrangement of human beings within capitalist society from the natural conditions which formed the basis for their existence—what he called ‘the everlasting nature-imposed condition[s] of human existence’” (103). What we

can glean from Marx's use of metabolic rift is (highly distilled) the theory that an interdependency exists between humans and nature which capitalism has interrupted. If we take this as truth, wilderness is a construction that simply cannot exist because humans and nature have inherent interactions that cannot be separated from one another, no matter how much physical space one might try to put between them.

Finally, wilderness preservation may be reflective of the early roots of American environmentalism, but as Haraway states it is important to "find another relationship to nature besides reification and possession" (qtd. in DeLoughrey and Handley 8). In their book *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, DeLoughrey and Handley argue that bridging environmental literature with postcolonial discourse is one way of expanding perspectives of nature. Actually, many of the benefits the authors point to blend the three dominant concerns of the environmental movement outlined by Martínez-Alier. This includes the ability to more fully understand how colonialism continues to alter geography, to include representations of culture/nature that do not reflect the dualism of European hierarchies, to engage with representations of sustainability and questions of deep time, and finally to posit questions of what voices and perspectives speak for nature in narrative modes (24-25). In bridging environmental and postcolonial discourse, we can create globally-representative models of ecological thinking that do not favor one mode over another.

Further, investigating the roots of ideas like wilderness allow us to understand the impact of these ideologies. As DeLoughrey and Handley write, "we see how colonial violence was mystified by invoking a model of conserving an untouched (and often feminized) Edenic landscape. Thus the nostalgia for a lost Eden, an idealized space outside of human time, is closely connected to displacing the ways that colonial violence disrupted

human ecologies” (13). The identification of an Edenic space also acknowledges the important role religion played in justifying European colonialism. While there was a strong trend of missionaries entering into Arctic space, especially in Greenland and Canada (Vaughn, 130, 179), DeLoughrey and Handley’s emphasis on returning to a lost paradise reminds us of religious presence in even seemingly secular voyages.

These culturally-rooted ideologies exemplify the ways in which the nature/culture divide results in a difficulty to comprehend other modes of engagement with natural space. Moreover, these ideologies persevere through time. As Glon identifies in Canada, initial failings to include other representations of identity or relationships results in a persistent undervaluing of other modes of being (242). Guha also calls attention to the importance of including various perspectives in knowledge creation in his article “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique.” Here, the trope of wilderness continues to exclude humans, specifically those that live within its well-defined borders. As he states, even those rural communities who live closer to natural environments are increasingly denied access to these spaces (6). Visions of an untouched wilderness are therefore only one perspective of nature.

These are important points to understand because it demonstrates the lineage from which wilderness arose and the ways in which contemporary scholars think around perspectives on natural space. Breaking it down into the sum of its parts we can understand that the trope of wilderness arises from the European divide between culture and nature. This is an important point to remember as we transition into our discussion of the construction of an Arctic imaginary, as this formation occurred from one cultural perspective. Moreover, these productions do not often include the Traditional Knowledge of the indigenous cultures who live in these spaces. As we have discussed, the image of the Inuit presented in nineteenth

century renditions of the Arctic are largely inaccurate. Moreover, in fiction the culture is given only a few acknowledgements here and there, primarily of negative tone, and the absence of which fuels the idea of the Arctic as an uninhabited space.

Another relic of the Arctic as a “blank” space, or a wilderness devoid of material value, occurred in the lack of evident Arctic resources. As archeologist Robert McGhee points out, there were no immediate promises of wealth to be attained in the Arctic landscape (216). Contrary to colonial spaces such as South America where colonists removed gold, coffee, sugar, and other material goods, the Arctic held virtually no financial promise. In fact, it is this lack of extractive resources that allowed the Arctic to withhold colonial interest for such a long period. While other lands were centers of European exploits during the height of European imperialism, the Arctic remained largely untouched. This is not for lack of trying. In 1576 ex-pirate Martin Frobisher returned to England from a small expedition in search of the Northwest Passage, with him a small black rock containing gold. The next year a second expedition set out under the guise of discovering the Northwest passage, though in fact was an extractive expedition which resulted in the discovery of more gold and silver. The third attempt was what Richard Vaughn calls the one of the “largest Arctic expeditions ever mounted” (68). The voyage was composed of fifteen ships and four hundred men who were to open ore mines and build a settlement. However, the result was 1,350 tons of insignificant rock shipped back to England and no established settlement. Thus, both the rocks and Arctic land were deemed empty of financial value, and the tundra skirted European hands for a number of centuries. Future expeditions focused on potential trade routes and whaling, but the possibility of large-scale extractive practices disappeared. The colonization seen in the Americas during the time would not reach the Arctic until the rise of train oil in the nineteenth century.<sup>iii</sup> So, not only was the Arctic perceived as a land devoid of people, but

also a land devoid of value. A dangerous, blank space deemed the ultimate “wilderness.” To round out McGhee’s previous statement, this blank canvas made space for “patriotic fervor, the desire to expand human knowledge and most prominently the quest for personal advancement and personal celebrity [which] formed a potent mix of motives that attracted romantics, misfits and megalomaniacs to the Arctic regions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (217).

This dangerous blank space therefore brings us back to Cronon’s critique of wilderness. In a brief summary, Cronon argues that wilderness acts as the corrective to our human selves, a human-conjured escape from civilization. Without civilization, there would be no wilderness, as “Wilderness hides its unnaturalness behind a mask that is all the more beguiling because it seems so natural” (7). In fact, wilderness is such a corrective that before the industrial revolution and mass migration to cities, the concept took on negative connotations instead of the emblem of freedom it wears today. In the nineteenth century, this negative view of wilderness, called “savage” and “waste” in narratives and religious texts for centuries (8) refitted itself to the contours of a mythologized Arctic paradise situated within Arctic wilderness. The possibility of an Arctic paradise akin to an “Eden” (Sand) can also be seen as a result of rhetoric on the sublime, realized particularly well in the Romanticism of nineteenth century Europe. Here, God disappeared from the realm of civilization and relocated himself to the wilderness where he demonstrated his power in natural phenomenon. In this sense, wilderness became a place of the holy and the terrible, where one could meet with either demise or hallowed revelation. The result was sublime terror mixed with delight. It was thus this idea of the sublime that led to the “sense of the wilderness as a landscape where the supernatural lay just beneath the surface” (Cronon 10). Wilderness became a place where boundaries were broken, certainty was inoperative, and

established systems of ordering could not be easily determined. As we will see, it was this concept of a sublime wilderness that helped fuel the Arctic imaginary, a place where supernatural phenomena and Edenic space existed as truth to the European mind.

## 2. The Arctic Imaginary

These ideas of wilderness can help us better understand the ways in which the Arctic was constructed by the European imagination throughout the nineteenth century. Using three fiction works to do so, we will see that the Arctic was not a place realistically constructed in European works of fiction, but instead upheld an illusory nature reflective of wilderness ideals. That is, the Arctic in its reality is absent from nineteenth century fiction works. Not only do these works reflect the illusory nature of the Arctic imaginary, but they also reflect the pervasiveness of Arctic thought to leak beyond national borders into a cultural imaginary across Europe. We will specifically look at three fiction works, one British and two French, all of which share the same conventions in Arctic construction. The British text operates more on the periphery of this essay, and seeks to inform the tropes expressed within the French texts. As we will see, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, George Sand's *Laura: voyage dans le cristal* and Jules Verne's *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* each contribute to and critique the tropes of the Arctic imaginary found in nineteenth century Europe. Together, the three texts demonstrate three main themes: first, the constructed nature of the Arctic in literature and narratives, specifically through desires for scientific knowledge and nationalism. Second, an obsession with the spectral atmosphere of the Arctic, and third, a transportation of European ideologies into Arctic space. While the remainder of this section will focus on the first theme, the second and third themes will be discussed in the subsequent section.



If wilderness is a constructed space, the Arctic is the ultimate embodiment of this construction in European eyes. Not only did few Europeans actually visit the Far North during this time, but the space itself was so drastically different than the relatively temperate climate of Europe that those who did visit found it difficult to express in words the reality of the place. For example, in his *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819-20-21-22*, in an effort to make the Arctic appear less frightening, Sir John Franklin discredits previous voyager's description of icebergs because "these masses of ice are frequently magnified to an immense size through the illusive medium of a hazy atmosphere, and on this account their dimensions have often been exaggerated by voyagers" (17). Franklin's aside demonstrates the inability of explorers to reach any "absolute" knowledge of Arctic space, and in fact Franklin contends with various scientific accounts throughout his text. Bellot's accounts of Arctic space also exhibits the difficulty to describe Arctic phenomena.

4 Août—Ce matin, nous voyons distinctement les effets de ce que les baleiniers appellent *water sky*, c'est-à-dire une bande noirâtre au-dessus de l'horizon sur une hauteur de 5 à 6° qui indique de l'eau dans les parties de l'horizon qu'elle surmonte; le *ice-sky*, ou *blink*; est au contraire une bande blanche brillante de 2 à 3° seulement, causée sans doute par les réflexions des rayons lumineux sur la glace (86).

Here, Bellot's account of the iceblink echoes not only the discrepancies in descriptions of Arctic spectacles, but also the difficulty of describing these scenes to those who have never before witnessed them. This difficulty occurs throughout Bellot's text as he attempts to describe Arctic space, including descriptions of sun dogs (65).<sup>iv</sup>

These imaginings contributed to the Arctic imaginary as it made its way throughout Europe in the nineteenth century. As Adriana Craciun states in the book *Writing Arctic*

*Disaster*, narratives of these sort helped promote the Arctic as a place simultaneously real and unreal. The testimonies from the travelers who walked these lands could not be tested and their reports obscure boundaries in what counts as “truth.” For example, Cracium observes that Franklin’s text “obscures distinctions between authentic and imaginary exploration, scientific and religious episteme, naturalistic and Gothic modes, and finally, authors and explorers” (110). If the “truth” of the Arctic as disseminated from its explorers could not be trusted, the fiction it produced only served to further invent the Arctic imaginary. However, unlike the travel narratives, the works of fiction presented themselves as self-aware of this construction and, at times, critical of the illusory nature presented in Arctic travel narratives.

The most obvious example of this comes from a text well examined, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Within the framework of the story, captain Richard Walton reveals that his desire to undertake a voyage to the Far North resulted from his failure to produce poetry. He admits this disappointment when he writes “I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation” (51). In the wake of the setback, Walton decides to become a sailor because “do I not deserve to accomplish some great purpose. My life might have been passed in ease and luxury; but I preferred glory to every enticement that wealth placed in my path” (51). Instead of producing a “Paradise of my own creation,” Walton decides to search for that impossible Paradise promised to Polar explorers who might reach an open sea. Despite the numerous warning signs that no such Paradise exists, Walton pursues the reverie as a poet pursues the imaginary of the mind. Shelley, evidently, understood the constructed nature of Arctic space and sought to underscore this detail by placing as her captain an imaginative man, capable of re-producing paradise through the illusion of his own thoughts. As Jessica Richard states in her essay “‘A Paradise of My Own Creation’: *Frankenstein* and

the Improbable Romance of Polar Exploration,” “Polar exploration narratives reveal descriptive science to be an art of creation rather than an act of objective recording; as such, descriptive science carries many of penetrating science’s risks in addition to the perils that Shelley saw in other arts of creation” (296). Shelley’s Walton therefore stands in for the creative explorer, perhaps an arbitrator of fantasy more than truth.

George Sand’s *Laura* also holds fantasy over truth in Arctic exploration narratives. While Shelley makes explicit reference to the poetic leanings of Arctic narratives, Sand reveals her critique through the form of the novella itself. Sand’s text details the journey of a young Alexis who falls in love with his cousin, Laura, during a series of fantastic journeys inside his geologist uncle’s collection of geodes. Eventually, Alexis’ journeys within the geodes lead him and his uncle to search for the mythologized Eden at the North Pole. Throughout these episodes, Alexis fails to maintain clear images of reality and the reader cannot know if these experiences are real or imagined. In the first half of the text, the geodes reflect the space of the Arctic imaginary, which Alexis later encounters in its (possible) reality as he makes a voyage to the Arctic. Throughout the text, it is unclear whether or not Alexis truly inhabited the geodes and if he truly traveled to the Arctic. Not even Alexis seems to know, and constantly questions his own experiences and sanity in his search for reality. In this way, Arctic narratives can be seen as spaces constructed of both the real and the unreal, with the possibility of both existing simultaneously as Sand blurs the boundaries of reality. Moreover, Sand’s decision to use crystals as a metaphor for Arctic exploration is itself a mediation on what it means to unearth truth. As E.G. Wilson exemplifies in his book *The Spiritual History of Ice: Romanticism, Science and the Imagination*, crystals have a particular historical tradition of representing the misrepresented, because “Unlike a simple mirror, which only reflects the magician’s own subjective image . . . and unlike an ordinary

window, which merely reveals the magician's objective surroundings . . . , the crystal is a manifold of mirrors and windows. It gathers and blends subjective projections and objective events" (14). In this way, even the medium of crystals demonstrates the imaginary of the Arctic as a place simultaneously real and unreal.

What both *Frankenstein* and *Laura* represent is an inability to describe the surroundings accurately and an inability to order these surroundings through logic. Instead, the Arctic imaginary is refracted and expanded so that one can never get a true representation of its environment. Instead, we are left with poetic visualizations and sublime accounts of seemingly blank space.

Another way in which the Arctic imaginary became complicated is through the continual reference to various travel accounts as complicated moments of "truth." As we have seen in Franklin's narrative, he repeatedly discredits other narratives for their lack of accurate representation. However, he also at times relies on narratives to aid in his conception of landscape and geographical location. Bellot is also fond of recounting stories throughout his text, including histories passed on by Ross (35) who Verne invoked in his own text.

Verne's *Voyages et aventures du capitaine Hatteras* makes a similar move and continually references the voyages of past explorers as guides for his own expedition (Weber). Compared to the texts of Shelly and Sand, Verne's text has a fairly simple plot. Captain Hatteras is in search of the North Pole, and will do anything to reach it. The text includes the various successes and failures of this endeavor. First, Verne opens his text with a discussion of Arctic exploration history, detailing the European discovery of Greenland in 970 to Sir John Franklin's disappearance in 1845. It is through the knowledge of this history that Dr. Clawbonny created his own imagination of the Arctic, as "Les noms de ces hardis navigateurs se pressaient dans son souvenir, et il croyait entrevoir sous les arceaux glacés de

la banquise les pâles fantômes de ceux qui ne revinrent pas” (44). This is one of the first references Verne makes of Arctic explorers informing one another as they sail throughout the icy seas, and their history helps Clawbonny create an imaginary of the Arctic where past explorers act as guides through the wilderness. It is not only Clawbonny who seems to rely on past explorers. Verne also makes reference to previous voyages throughout the text. At one moment, Hatteras risks his life to follow the coordinates to reserve coal as laid out by Sir Edward Belcher because “l’on ne pouvait mettre sa véracité en doute” (293).<sup>v</sup> At this moment Hatteras and his crew lack sufficient energy sources to overwinter, yet are trapped in sea ice. Belcher’s coordinates could therefore prove life-saving, however are located 250 miles south of Hatteras’ location. Despite the risk, Hatteras chooses to pursue the coal. In fact, they never make it to the location of the coal and are forced to turn back, keeping Belcher’s assertion a mystery. Whether or not Belcher was correct, the episode demonstrates the circular creation of fact in Arctic space, as explorer’s words are taken as the truth that future explorers base their decisions upon, despite knowing if the claims are actually true. In the Arctic, myth turns into truth which becomes re-inscribed as myth, a cyclical cycle that promoted the creation of the Arctic imaginary.

The reliance on previous expeditions demonstrates the human need to grasp some sort of “fact” within unknown spaces, and demonstrates the degree to which Arctic explorers feared their situation. While many of these travel narratives came to be taken as fact, the reliance on them in such life-threatening situations seems almost absurd. This is perhaps why the theme of folly rages throughout Arctic texts in both episodes and language. For example, in *Laura*, Alexis is constantly referred to as having “un rêve de poète ou de fou” (75) and fraught with “la fièvre” (72): he is a man who experiences hallucinations and which cannot be trusted as fact. Hatteras’ rationality is also constantly in question throughout the text, as

his crewmates refer to “la folie polaire” (444) that encompasses him. All of this emphasizes the inability of explorers to offer clear reflections of the Arctic in an unmediated reality, and demonstrates that within the genealogy of Arctic texts, there is no pure, rational account. Taken together, the tropes of imagination, mythologizing, and madness aid in the creation of the Arctic imaginary that swept across Europe in the nineteenth century.

### 3. “Blankness,” Science, and National Pride

Finally, the trope of the Arctic imaginary helped to authenticate the nationalism of Arctic expeditions. As we have seen, Arctic expeditions generally did not seek to find extractive materials for wealth creation and the opening of southern trade route made the discovery of a Northwest Passage almost redundant. Despite this, European nations continued to send expeditions into Arctic space for the sake of establishing national ownership. The “blank” trope of the Arctic aided in these processes by creating a blank space devoid of title. Not only did this idea of blankness obscure the claims of indigenous cultures who had lived in Arctic space for thousands of years, it saw the land as a place where a nation could inscribe its identity however it saw fit.

As Lisa Bloom writes in her text *Gender on Ice*, the Arctic provided a space for individuals (normally males) to showcase their abilities and determination.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, polar exploration narratives played a prominent part in defining the social construction of masculinity and legitimized the exclusion of women from many public domains of discourse. As all-male activities, the explorations symbolically enacted the men’s own battle to become men. The difficulty of life in desolate and freezing regions provided the ideal mythic site where men could show themselves as heroes capable of superhuman feats. They could demonstrate, in a clichéd phrase of polar exploration

narratives, ‘the boundlessness of the individual spirit.’ . . . Men such as these, according to U.S. writer Frank Norris, were destined to rise to power and glory. (6)

We can expand Bloom’s analysis of the masculine trope to encompass the “power and glory” that would have been bestowed upon the nation that discovered the Northwest Passage. This ideology is especially strong in Verne’s text, as Captain Hatteras, a British captain, engages with an ideological battle with an American captain he meets along the way. The fear of any non-British citizen discovering the passage is so strong that despite the destruction of his own vessel, he refuses to sail on an American ship. The text references this nationalistic fever multiple times, including a very obvious moment when Hatteras states “Comme Anglais, je ne veux pas, nous ne voulons pas que de plus hardis aillent là où nous n'aurions pas été. Comme Anglais, je ne souffrirai pas, nous ne souffrirons pas que d'autres aient la gloire de s'élever plus au nord. Si jamais pied humain doit fouler la terre du pôle, il faut que ce soit le pied d'un Anglais!” (87). If we follow the logic of Bloom’s narrative, the glory of “discovering” the Pole arises not only from the masculine desire to demonstrate strength and resilience of spirit, but also from the desire to demonstrate national prowess through the country’s naval abilities. If reaching the Pole was a “superhuman feat,” it would signal to other countries the supremacy of that nation’s navy.

The emphasis of using Arctic travel to exemplify naval force is reflected most clearly through the lens of John Barrow’s *Chronological History*. In the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, Barrow insisted that Arctic exploration resume and proclaimed that the Royal Navy undertake the task.<sup>vi</sup> During this time, Russia made speedy advancements in the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. Seeing this, Barrow declared that he would not allow “Another nation to accomplish almost the only interesting discovery that remains to be made in geography” (367). Despite the continual evidence that a Northwest passage was nearly impossible to

navigate, the British navy continued to send over a dozen notable expeditions to the icy waters between the years of 1818-1837 (148).<sup>vii</sup> Of course, none of these expeditions were successful in their task. What they did show, however, was the money, lives, and time Britain spent in search of this elusive passage. The obsession with finding the Pole mirrors the nationalistic objectives behind discovering the Northwest Passage, and reflected the ideology of the nineteenth century Arctic voyages. Verne makes reference to this in the context of Britain, and also emphasizes the extent to which ideologies of British nationalism was ingrained into the nation's imagination. At one particularly insightful moment Clawbonny emphasizes the way nationalism had taken an almost divinely-ordained space in the imagination of the British explorers.

[S]uivant moi, la plus grande partie de la neige ou de la pluie que nous recevons dans ces régions polaires est faite de l'eau des mers des zones tempérées; il y a tel flocon qui, simple goutte d'eau d'un fleuve de l'Europe, s'est élevé dans l'air sous forme de vapeur, s'est formé en nuage, et est enfin venu se condenser jusqu'ici: il n'est donc pas impossible qu'en la buvant, cette neige, nous nous désaltérions aux fleuves mêmes de notre pays. (254)

This relevels the perception developed in the eighteenth century that British imperialism was almost divinely bestowed through the water that flowed from British rivers, into the Thames, and eventually into the oceans—a logic used to justify all British imperialism as essentially re-claiming already British land.<sup>viii</sup>

Alongside this mindset, it's important to note that it is Dr. Clawbonny who states this association. The link stems from nationalism and scientific advancement. As Barrow states, looking for the Northwest Passage was not simply an act of staking claim, but also of discovering new geographies. While nationalism was a main goal of most expeditions of the



time, the importance of scientific knowledge was also emphasized. In fact, it is quite difficult to disentangle scientific pursuits from Arctic expeditions. As Battail points out in his essay “L’Appel du Grand Nord. Entre fascination exotique et curiosité scientifique,” Arctic expeditions have been linked to science throughout their history. Battail states that some of the first expedition narratives translated across Europe arose from Swedish scientific explorations into the Arctic, because “Pour les Suédois le Grand Nord apparaissait comme un gigantesque laboratoire de plein air où l’on pouvait étudier des phénomènes spécifiques tels que les propriétés de la glace ou les aurores polaires” (242). Later, Maupertuis would travel into the Arctic to conduct his famous experiments measuring longitudinal degree at the Meridian (Pratt 16). Even in Bellot’s narrative, the preference calls him “un officier courageux et instruit, élevé jusqu’à l’héroïsme par la passion de la science et l’amour de la gloire” (VIII). The dual entanglement of exploration and scientific narrative, then, became an essential part of Arctic exploration.

At the same time that the Arctic was deemed a place indescribable, explorers also sought to understand it through science. In a way, this inscription of scientific method helped to order an otherwise unpredictable Arctic. This fits into Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of “planetary consciousness” as she describes in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Here, “planetary consciousness” refers to the European practice of building new systems of knowledge in reaction to emerging scientific discoveries in conquered spaces, especially within the conquered interior. Natural history was a large part of these new systems, and exemplified a way of making sense of the world not based on mapmaking or navigational knowledge (30). As a result, systems of ordering became a popular way of making sense of this new “planetary consciousness” and had the consequence of calling “upon human intervention (intellectual, mainly) to compose an order

. . . classificatory systems created the task of located every species on the planet, extracting it from its particular, arbitrary surroundings (the chaos), and placing it in its appropriate spot in the system” (31). In fact, Pratt marks the beginning of this new mode of consciousness with Maupertuis’ 1735 expedition. It was through this new lens that Europeans sought to make sense of the world not only through the edges of ports and demarcations between land and sea, but through the interior spaces which comprised these borders and the logics of nature that lay within them.

However, as with everything, the culture from which one hails aids in the determination of that person’s interpretation of things. As Pratt states, the European explorers used their planetary consciousness to make sense of their place on the planet (24), just as it helped them to make sense of new landscapes like the Arctic. Similar to the ways in which wilderness provides an exterior to civilization, natural discovery aided in the understanding of European identity within the newfound lands. However, this self-awareness did not often obviously present itself in exploration narratives. While the explorers were busy trying to place the world into order, they seemed to forget that they were also trying to place themselves within this order. Sand’s *Laura* reminds her readers of the scientist’s place in their own work and does not allow the researcher to situate themselves outside their systems. In fact, one could argue that this is the main theme of *Laura*: throughout the text, Sand refers to the importance of science, but never forgets to include the fact that within this search, the scientist is in fact trying to make sense of themselves.

First, Alexis’ friend and mentor Walter calls attention to this by asserting that science is not just about order: “Tu n’as pas assez vu le but de la science, mon cher enfant. Tu as farci ta mémoire de vains détails, et voilà qu’ils te fatiguent le cerveau sans profit pour la vie pratique . . . Rappelle-toi ce que je te disais, Alexis: la pioche, l’enclume, la sonde, le pic et

le marteau, voilà les plus brillants joyaux et les plus respectables forces du raisonnement humain!” (73). Later, Laura says that “comme de tous les secrets des sciences que vous appelez naturelles: celui qui les sait peut vous affirmer que les choses sont, et comment elles sont; mais quand il s’agit du pourquoi, chacun donne son opinion” (79). In this view, science exists for the sake of humans. To Walter, science provides tools through which humans ensure future prosperity and advancing success. To Laura, science can provide facts but it is ultimately up to the individual to determine their opinion of those facts. In both cases, science exists to help the human understand themselves. The scientific practice is not impartial to human interpretation, as many scientists such as Linnaeus sought to promote through objective categorizations and mathematics. While Sand acknowledges the importance of science and facts, what passages such as these seek to accomplish is an acknowledgement of science not as a “pure” practice but instead situated within human biases and desire. Caroline Warman states that this is a study of the human imagination, “pitting materialism against idealism, conflating them, and subsequently making that pairing into a sort of dream” (13). Philippe Chavasse reads these theories of almost-supernatural science as dual instruction in “le respect de la nature” and “l’équilibre entre le rêve et la science” (108). Analysis such as these demonstrates science as a simultaneous endeavor in discovery and projection of human desires (whether that be future prosperity or self-discovery). It also complicates the ability of language to transmit facts in any pure way—even if one tries to accurately portray the sense of a place, as the explorers of the Arctic did, one cannot fully overcome the mediating device of language. Philippe Mustière acknowledges this in his reading of *Laura* in what he calls “les pouvoirs de l’imaginaire dans le domaine de l’investigation scientifique” (204).

Critics such as Pratt reveal similar perspectives, as exploration and scientific discovery emerged from existing cultural formations, including desires to know oneself within an expanding global consciousness. In a fitting end for such a book, Laura tells Alexis that “tu as fait bien du chemin et bravé bien des périls, mon pauvre Alexis, pour chercher le bonheur qui t’attendait à la maison” (150). This insight perfectly sums up the undertaking of *Laura*: that in all the exploration and scientific discovery conducted throughout these Arctic voyages, the explorer did not seek far-away lands and adventures, but simply to discover a place for himself in the world. It seems that in exploring and traveling the dangerous waters of the nineteenth century, with imperialist cravings and search for scientific understanding, the explorers forgot that they already had a home and did not need to seek it elsewhere.

We will explore this yearning for home in the next section. Here, we will come to understand how explorers filled the “blank” canvass of the Arctic with ideologies and dreams of home that resulted in experiences of the uncanny and other elements which depict tropes of homesickness. For now, though, we can see how the ideals of a constructed wilderness which emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century influenced the Arctic imaginary in works of both fiction and non-fiction. The Arctic imaginary occurred as a space highly constructed and impossible to see clearly, which resulted in fabrications, exaggerations, and difficulty of discovering the “truth” within Arctic space. Within the imaginary rose a living void which Europeans sought to fill with dreams and reveries, and the practice helped European explorers to make sense of themselves as the world expanded and grew. This resulted in a culturally-specific construction of Arctic space. While we have investigated the construction of the Arctic through modes of imagination, nationalism, and science, in the next section we will understand the figures and imaginaries Europeans placed

upon this stage as the actors through which they could play out their own idealizations of their place in the world.

### **B. *Voids and Dreams***

In the essay “Boréalisme. Pour un atlas sensible du Nord,” Sylvain Briens argues for the concept of *boréalisme*, a term encompassing the multiplicity of perspectives and meanings that arise when considering Arctic space. Following the trend of *écopoétique*, instead of viewing the literature that was inspired by Arctic space as a concrete representation of a geographical location, Briens argues that we could consider this trend *boréalisme*. Here, the space of the Arctic is rearticulated through art and literature in its aesthetics and form. In this view, we do not think of the literature as a representation of space but instead that “le *boréalisme* se construit par le biais d’un processus de représentation et de projection des images qui bouleverse leurs conditions de production et les resémente” (159). Instead of representing accurately a sense of space, *boréalisme* represents the geography of the imaginary, a place conceived of dreams that, at its onset, reflected the perspectives of Europeans throughout the nineteenth century. “Les formations discursives inspirées par le ‘Nord’” (159) helped to create this genre, where travel to the Far North created a disruption in predictable relationships between humans, between humans and nature, and between reason and imaginary that inspired writers of this time to re-imagine relationships. This resulted in something akin to an idealization of imaginary places instead of an accurate reality that would conform more truthfully to the geographical space in which these fantasies played out. The concept of *boréalisme* could also fit into the category that Timothy Morton deems *ambience*, or the “ultimate nemesis” of environmental nature writing because “These distortions reappear here in more conscious form, as ‘strangers’—human others, animals, and other beings who wander into and out of the world, constituting it as its boundaries, but

also undermining its coherence” (81). Evoking ambience further helps us recognize *boréalisme* because it facilitates an understanding that, in writing, it is not the reality of the place that is represented but instead the ambience, a distortion of reality that can never be accurately representational. *Boréalisme* reveals a style inspired by a place, but not the place itself. Therefore, instead of perceiving the texts referenced here as texts about a geographical place, we can instead shift our perspective to view them as texts about perspective. This is similar to a key point of *écopoétique*, as Blanc et al. asks in “Littérature & écologie: vers une écopoétique,” how we can consider works such as these as examples of “une réinscription écologique de la nature dans l’art et, par conséquent, à une réinscription de l’art dans la nature” (17). These questions are well suited for addressing the Arctic imaginary. In a place as fantastical as the Arctic imaginary, it would be difficult to argue that art did not play a crucial role in constructing its location, especially given the fact that the most fantastic imaginings of the Arctic were not pure representations or first-hand accounts, but instead the collective product of an entire continent imagining a space.

Thus, following the logic of *boréalisme*, the Arctic imaginary is less about a geographical location and more about the perspective inspired by a place. Sand’s *Laura* beautifully demonstrates this tendency through the emphasis on her main character’s interior world throughout the novel, rather than his geographical location. As we have acknowledged previously, in the first half of the novel Alexis’ reliability as a narrator is constantly called into question by placing him in dream-like states of impossible fantasies that even he questions. This inability to concretely place him in space is also echoed by the characters around him, who constantly question his lucidity. The imaginary is only more amplified in the second half of the novel as Alexis literally travels into and inhabits the Arctic imaginary.

In this moment, Alexis joins his uncle Nasias on an expedition to the Far North in an attempt to find the Edenic utopia whose myth has been passed down across cultures since Pytheas' northern journey. Their travel is remarkably uneventful. As Alexis notes, "Malgré la fréquence et l'intensité des tempêtes dans cette région et à cette époque de l'année, aucun danger sérieux n'avait retardé notre marche, ni compromis la solidité de notre excellent navire" (105). Moreover, "nous avons pu parvenir si tard sans être bloqués" (106), despite the fact that in reality, arriving late in the season would have almost certainly meant the impossibility of pursuing the Arctic sea. Already, the Arctic appears more as a construction, a fantasy land, instead of an accurate representation. Nasias' enthusiasm for the adventure contributes to this construction, and Alexis himself admits this as he states that "je ne distinguais pas toujours les résultats de son imagination d'une réalité qui se serait déjà produite autour de moi" (104). Here, not even Alexis can discern a reality. As they push further into Arctic space, this inability to recognize an accurate reality grows, and Alexis reaches a point where he enters a near-permanent trance. Travelling across the frozen land on sledges, guided by Inuit travelers, Alexis spends several weeks in his trance: "je m'éveillai et me rendormis plusieurs fois, sans pouvoir me rendre compte du cours des heures" (114). As he traverses in this state, his time is spent considering visions and attempting to discover the reality of "l'hallucination la plus complète" (117). Because of this, the reader's focus turns to Alexis' interior life instead of the terrain he inhabits, representing Brien's concept of *boréalisme*. Finally, after traversing a few key landmarks, the Arctic disappears completely and it is only then that Alexis' hallucinations cease. At this moment, the conventions of any recognizable Arctic disappear: the Inuit guides vanish (we are told Nasias sent them away, but it is more probable that he murdered them), the ice melts, and recognizable animals are replaced by fantastic beasts—only Alexis and his uncle

remain as any recognizable creatures. Here, Sand replaces the icy Arctic with an imagined Eden, the apex of the European imaginary. We will touch more on the ending of Sand's text later, but it is important to note that Alexis' hallucinations nearly stop at this moment, and Sand's description of the landscape becomes much more concrete.

This reveals an interesting connection: Sand describes Alexis' long journey across the Arctic as she simultaneously describes him exploring the terrain of his own mind, a place just as unknown and unfamiliar. While Alexis physically undertakes his dangerous journey north, he mentally embarks on an internal exploration. Instead of filling the pages with descriptions of the landscape and narratives of conquering space, she describes Alexis' own thoughts and navigation of his internal processes. As Alexis reaches the edge of Arctic space, so too does he reach the edge of his imagination. The two then come together in the creation of Eden. While Alexis struggled against his own perceptions of reality, and against the elements of Arctic space, as soon as he reaches the paradise his thoughts return to more lucid rationality (135). Instead of straddling the world between the imaginary and the real, Alexis has fully entered the realm of the imaginary and he no longer questions his own reason. It seems, then, that in order to reach this epitome of the European imaginary of dreams and ideals, Alexis had to traverse his imagination just as he had to traverse the Arctic. The Arctic is, then, a vehicle through which the European imaginary can fully emerge, and Alexis is the example. While it might be dangerous to relinquish yourself to the elements, as to your imagination, once one does the result can be a space otherwise unimaginable where the true dreams and desires of the European mind can finally reveal themselves.

Alexis' simultaneous voyage into the Arctic and his imagination is an exaggerated example of what occurred throughout the Arctic imaginary, or *boréalisme*. As we will see in



the following pages, the Arctic provided such a place for the imagination to play itself out that Arctic-inspired literature became more about the identity of the explorer themselves instead of a deep meditation on place. As I have argued earlier, the “planetary consciousness” of European explorers during this time period resulted in contemplations of what it meant to have a European identity in a rapidly expanding, globalized world. In this section, I expand on that thought and argue that the European explorer experienced such a severe disruption of their perceived place in the world that they could not conceptualize the place without referencing their own cultural identity. David mentions this in his analysis in *The Arctic in the British Imagination* where he states that “the reader or viewer [of Arctic representations] approached the now transformed image or text with a variety of preconceptions of his or her own. When this resulting image was reinterpreted by others who had no first-hand experience, the already altered image underwent still further change” (10-11). The unfamiliar climate contributed to this and the perceived blankness of the place also allowed them a stage through which this process could more easily occur. It is this perceived blankness, in fact, that perhaps contributed to the extreme nature of the imaginary which emerged in the pages of Arctic construction. As Margaret Cohen argues in *The Novel and the Sea* “the sublimation of the seas culminated in the empty seas of the Romantic sublime. Cleared of historical mariners, the sea was then open to imaginative repopulation by poets, novelists, and artists” (11) so too was the Arctic repopulated with the desires of the European explorer. To repopulate the Arctic with the European identity meant invoking systems of belief that aided in a re-enforcement of their own identity, mainly through the figures of women, animals, and myth. The following discussion is therefore broken into two parts: first, a discussion of the dream-like figures which allowed the European traveler to repopulate the seemingly empty wilderness and second, the culmination of these reveries

with imaginings of an Edenic paradise located within the heart of Arctic space, the ultimate symbol of the European Arctic imaginary.

### 1. Animals and Apparitions

Despite the solitude Europeans found within the Arctic, various animations helped the European to populate this otherwise “empty” space. As Wilson points out, “The virginal ices covering the poles have for centuries stimulated robust visions, serving as blank screens on which men have projected deep reveries” (141). Against the backdrop of a perceived void, the Arctic was filled with invented beings through which the explorer sought to make sense of his surroundings. We can see examples of these projections in both *Laura* and *Hatteras*, where the main characters are propelled forward by external beings which help him make sense of the space. While these beings take many forms, we will here focus on the ways in which imaginings of animals and women populated the Arctic.

First, animals. The animals of the Arctic complicate the explorer’s experience through the simultaneous danger and necessity they embody. While sea-voyages can be dangerous due to ice and storms, traversing land can be just as difficult due to animals. As Morton writes, animals “radically disrupts any idea of a single, independent, solid environment . . . the idea of ‘our’ environment becomes especially tricky when it starts to slither, swim, and lurch toward us” (99). While the Arctic in the European imagination was a largely “blank” space, animals complicate this by moving through the environment and disturbing expected order. Verne illustrates the difficulty animals pose most clearly, as he continually refers to the ways in which animals disrupt the progress of the expedition. This is particularly true of more dangerous animals like the polar bear. In one exceptionally action-packed episode, Hatteras and his crew are imprisoned in their snow-house by a group of hungry polar bears, an episode the Europeans believe they will lose until, in a moment of ingenuity, they use

explosives to literally blow the bears apart (344). This episode demonstrates many things, including the ability of technology to overpower natural hierarchies. However, it most clearly demonstrates that animals pose a threat to the established boundaries and orders established by Europeans in the Arctic—the ability of the bears to threaten the snow-house demonstrates how animals break boundaries between environmental spaces and complicate established order. Within the Arctic, the roaming animals make it difficult for Europeans to create predictable order.

Another complication is that animals are also a necessity. At a different point, Clawbonny remarks upon the importance of the polar bear, as “c'est bien l'animal le plus utile de ces contrées, car, à lui seul, il peut fournir la nourriture, les vêtements, la lumière et le combustible nécessaires à l'homme” (178). The bear is indeed a necessity. However, in this episode the explorers attempt to hunt a bear only to discover that it is in fact a fox. Due to the refractions of light, “nous tuons un ours, et c'est un renard qui tombe” (179). The difficulty of seeing resulted in the faulty kill and also reveals an acknowledgement of the role of imagination in Arctic space, where the explorers saw what they wanted to see instead of the thing itself. This projection of meaning continues: this isn't just any fox. They quickly discover that the fox wears a collar, an uncanny realization indeed. Upon further inspection, they discover that it is “un renard âgé de plus de douze ans, mes amis, un renard qui fut pris par James Ross en 1848” (180). Instantly, the doctor regrets killing the animal due to its cultural significance. We are told that the fox was one of many caught by James Ross, who engraved the location of his ships into the collar in the hope that one might reach the doomed Franklin expedition.<sup>ix</sup> In fact, in the essay “Le genre romanesque du récit de voyage scientifique au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle” Weber describes how Hatteras' adventures were based on the nineteenth century explorer and his uncle, Sir John Ross (72), giving this name particular

importance. The doctor then laments “cette pauvre bête qui aurait pu sauver la vie de deux équipages, est venu inutilement tomber sous nos balles” (180). The fox suddenly takes on a proxy of James Ross, with all the symbolism of reliance and ingenuity, and is bestowed significant meaning by the doctor. While previously the animals were seen as either disruptors or tools, the moment that the explorer can use the animal to re-inforce their own identity, it suddenly gains value as a living creature.

This turn is reminiscent of Dinesh Joseph Wadiwel’s article “Cows and Sovereignty: Biopower and Animal Life” where he states that the West has “exempted the non-human animal from agency as a political being” (2). In this sense, the animal sits outside of Foucault’s conception of biopolitics where the modern sovereign has a “power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death” (qtd. in Wadiwel). The question of where to allow or disallow life is not applied to the animal in the ways that it is to the more political being, the human. However, as we can see in this episode, the fox suddenly takes on the political role of human by standing in as proxy for Ross. It therefore would have been more fitting for the sovereign, Dr. Clawbonny, to knowingly allow or disallow the life rather than treating it as any other animal which is not granted this right. Alongside the separation between nature and culture that we discussed in the first section of this paper, this episode also demonstrates the inherent separation that the European explorer sees between themselves and other non-human animals. However, once they find a way to inscribe their identity onto the animal, it suddenly takes on living value.

The predisposition to identify with some animals became a theme in nineteenth century literature, of which the fox is only one example. As Turner states in his book *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind*, “literary animals continued to be caricatured men in beasts’ clothing” (7). This anthropomorphizing of animals has long

existed, as Aesop's fables demonstrated that "animals were used mainly as symbols of human vices and virtues" (3). This is important to note because it acknowledges that even while humans were attempting to re-define their place in an expanding world, the emerging trend of identifying more closely with animals (due to the developing theories of species grouping presented in Linnaeus' *Systema naturae*) had not yet made their way into the Arctic imaginary (7). While the rest of Europe was grappling with the confrontation of their own animalism (69), in the Arctic imaginary animals still existed below humans on hierarchies and took value only when they were bestowed human-like qualities.

This relationship looks slightly different when applied to domesticated animals, however. While Verne shows wild animals to be disruptors or tools, the domesticated animal acts to support the authority of its human companion. An important character throughout the text, Hatteras' dog Duk represents the captain's authority throughout the voyage. The dog at first stands in for a proxy of Hatteras during the explorer's mysterious absence throughout the first half of the voyage. While Hatteras conceals his identity in order to better observe the crew's loyalties, Duk retains his place as captain and fiercely corrects any moves to overthrow Hatteras' command of the ship. This persists to such an extent that the crew begin calling him "le dog-captain" (83). Throughout the text, Duk is seen reinforcing Hatteras' decisions and acting as his protector against a potentially disruptive crew. The role of Duk allows us to see what Keridiana Chez speaks to in her book *Victorian Dogs, Victorian Men: Affect and Animals in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*. While humans continued to have a complex relationship with wild animals, dogs of the nineteenth century helped to reinforce the authority of their owners. Outside the humane movement of which Hopkins speaks, the animals of the nineteenth century were mostly used to "demarcate the boundaries of the human" (15). Nicole Shukin also emphasizes the use of animals to reinforce power

structures, because when ventriloquized they appear to speak from the “universal and disinterested place of nature” (5). We can see this in Verne’s examples above, where the human uses animals as tools to support his own life-sustaining practices and also to reinforce human hierarchies. In the case of Duk, he acts to reinforce Hatteras’ authority and maintain established orders of home in an otherwise unfamiliar space. The ability of the human to train and keep the dog as a pet allowed them a “prosthetic” tool through which they could re-affirm their place in the world by essentially training the animal out of the dog (16). If we compare this relationship to that of the wild animal, this practice separates humans even further from the wild animals that inhabit natural spaces by placing the “degraded animal” (16) between humans and beasts. It seems fitting, then, that Hatteras’ dog Duk occupies such a strong role in the novel, as he allows Hatteras to maintain orders of home. It can thus be seen that within the Arctic imaginary, Verne uses animals as symbols of human accomplishment and barriers against disrupted hierarchies. Instead of losing themselves to the void of the Arctic imaginary, animals take on the task of re-affirming the identity of the European explorer.

While the explorer created idealized animal-human relationships within Arctic space, the explorers also brought another figure into Arctic space: women. While females were not often welcome on Arctic expeditions, this does not mean that the female was entirely absent. Instead, the feminine was invoked through ghostly encounters and acts of remembrance. In fact, in all four of the primary texts examined for this essay, women are only absent from Verne’s *Hatteras*, where the animal takes her place as the external validation of the explorer’s identity. For example, despite the feminine anxieties that run rampant in Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (Mellor 2), the female exists within the frame narrative of Walton’s Arctic journey. Actually, it is only because Walton writes to his sister that we even have

Frankenstein's story reinscribed in the text. Walton writes his sister not only as a form of communication but also because the self-reflection necessary of letter-writing calms him (50) and because it acts as a substitution for human companionship, an antidote to the loneliness of the Arctic (53). Thus, Walton writes not only for the benefit of his sister Margaret, but also because it reminds him that he is not abandoned in the Arctic void—he has flesh and blood which exists in a home he can return to. Margaret acts as an anchor through which Walton engages in self-reflection and self-affirmation instead of losing himself to Arctic space. Against the dangerous, unpredictable background of the Arctic, Margaret provides a memory of peace and home.

However, we also see images of women that occupy more closely spectral figures. Often, these women are romantic interests of the men that conjure them, instead of the desexualized figure of the sister that brings Walton peace and order. For example, in Doyle's *The Captain of the Polestar*, in the midst of Arctic wilderness the Captain disappears as he chases the ghost of his beloved across the frozen land, a ghost he could only recognize because "It is only here in these Arctic seas that stark, unfathomable stillness obtrudes itself upon you in all its gruesome reality. You find your tympanum straining to catch some little murmur, and dwelling eagerly upon every accidental sound within the vessel" (25). In Doyle's story, it is not the Arctic landscape that kills the Captain, but instead the ghost of his beloved.

Similarly, in Sand's *Laura*, the figure of Laura (real or not) pulls Alexis further and further into the Arctic. While Laura was the original catalyst for Alexis' visions within the geode, here she becomes the guide which lures Alexis into the wilderness. As the exploration party moves deeper into the Arctic, Alexis catches a glimpse of Laura and "elle mit un doigt sur ses lèvres, et, me montrant les traîneaux, elle me fit signe de la suivre et

disparut avant que j'eusse pu la rejoindre" (113). Alexis refers to this image as a "le spectre de Laura" (113) and later refers to the fantastical nature of these moments with her.

"Laura courait toujours à ma droite, me devançant à peine d'un ou deux pas. Je voyais nettement sa figure, qu'elle retournait sans cesse vers moi pour s'assurer que je la suivais. Elle était debout, les cheveux flottants, le corps enveloppé d'un manteau de plumes de grèbe qui formait autour d'elle les plis épais et satinés d'une neige nouvellement tombée. Etait-elle sur un traîneau ou portée par un nuage, traînée par des animaux fantastiques ou soulevée par une bourrasque à fleur de terre? Je ne pus m'en assurer; mais, durant un temps assez long, je la vis, et tout mon être en fut renouvelé. Quand son image s'effaça, je me demandai si ce n'était pas la mienne propre que j'avais vue se refléter sur la brillante muraille de glace que je côtoyais . . ."

(122)

In this moment, it is impossible to know whether or not Laura truly exists. What is clear, however, is that her image guides Alexis further into the Arctic. Laura is also deeply illustrative of the Arctic environment. The elements which surround her, including "un manteau de plumes de grèbe," "une neige nouvellement tombée," "un nuage" and "des animaux fantastiques" physically support her while she moves through space in a way which suggests her more-than-humanness. While Alexis travels on a sledge, Laura travels through the elements themselves.

Perhaps Alexis is guided by her, but one could also say he chases her into the Arctic. Throughout the text, Laura has been presented as an elusive character who coyly rejects Alexis' advances (85)—despite his desire for her, she remains outside his grasp. In this moment too, Alexis follows her but is unable to reach her because she is intangible, ephemeral, and uncontrollable, much like the wild Arctic space in which he finds himself.



Laura thus becomes representative of the inability of the European explorer to fully conquer the Arctic, yet who continues to pursue the ideal. In this way, both *Laura*, *The Captain of the Polestar*, and *Frankenstein* demonstrate the ways in which women are representative of various conceptions of nature, whether peaceful or wild.

Most clearly in *Laura*, evoking the female in a way which anchors her to the elements reflects the inclination to associate females with the natural environment, especially an unpredictable environment. As Carolyn Merchant describes in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*, uncontrollable nature was widely associated with women.

Like the Mother Earth image described in Chapter 1, wild uncontrollable nature was associated with the female. The images of both nature and women were two-sided. The virgin nymph offered peace and serenity, the earth mother nurture and fertility, but nature also brought plagues, famines, and tempests. Similarly, woman was both virgin and witch: the Renaissance courtly lover placed her on a pedestal; the inquisitor burned her at the stake. The witch, symbol of the violence of nature, raised storms, caused illness, destroyed crops, obstructed generation, and killed infants.

Disorderly women, like chaotic nature, needed to be controlled. (127)

As we have seen in the Arctic imaginary, the view of nature was so unpredictable and uncontrollable that authors constantly had to refer to the Arctic imaginary in an attempt to describe the climate. In the case of *Laura*, female figures contribute to this attempt to understand space. While Laura is not the villainous character described by Merchant, her analysis of the connection between women and nature allows us to understand why it became necessary that Laura guided Alexis into the Arctic. Within Arctic space, when females appeared as physical beings they were more than a memory (as in *Frankenstein*).

The female forms that appear in Arctic literature took on the identity of the enchantress, unpredictable and powerful, just like the Arctic itself. Given the connection that Merchant illustrates, the women brought into Arctic space are illustrative of established formations found in Europe during the time, despite women being largely absent from these journeys. By continuing to vividly connect women with natural space, the imaginings of women here represent another example of the ways in which the Arctic imaginary became representative of cultural beliefs and formations, instead of viewing the space more objectively.

## 2. A Northern Eden

As Merchant states, the entanglement of dangerous women and dangerous nature can be traced back to Eve's biblical original sin. Because of this, "the expulsion from the Garden into the wilderness equated the wilderness with the evil introduced when Eve submitted to the temptation of the serpent" (131). Interestingly, an almost reverse effect occurs in *Laura*, where Laura eventually leads Alexis to a paradise called "Eden" located in the heart of the Arctic. The theme of a tropical paradise located in the heart of the Arctic complicates the imaginary of Arctic travel and squarely resituates it in an even more culturally-ingrained desire to return to a lost land. While *Laura* is the only text here that directly calls the land "Eden," the similarities of myth between the Arctic paradise and the biblical Eden are abundant. For example, the Arctic paradise is said to have an immortal population which "know[s] no want" and has "rich lacustrine soils," "fecund animals, and trees that bore fruit even in winter" (Barry 16-17). This paradise persisted through Western mythology and was still popular in the nineteenth century (McGhee 28). If we follow Sand's conflation of the two, we can see a desire to return to paradise. The expulsion from Eden resulted in the expulsion into wilderness (the negative interpretation of wilderness that Cronon describes as the pre-nineteenth century norm). In the Arctic imaginary, one works backwards and must

traverse an unfamiliar wilderness to then return to the Edenic space. So, does the myth of an Edenic Arctic suggest the desire to return “home,” or is it representative of a desire to conquer the ultimate “natural” space? Perhaps both, but in either scenario the search for this lost land creates only anguish.

Nineteenth century literature capitalized on this myth so that alongside the other symbols of European culture that explorers transposed into the Arctic, the Arctic paradise was one of the more fantastical and popular images. It seems the ultimate fantasy and redemption story. If one could brave the vast Arctic wilderness, already the antithesis to civilization, man could redeem himself in an Edenic paradise, the definitive imaginary.

The figures of the Arctic imaginary (ghosts, beasts, storms, illusion) help to push the Arctic more towards theories of the sublime and the uncanny. Following Kant’s discussion, the sublime arises from an inability of the human mind to comprehend a perceived *limitlessness* while simultaneously awaking the inability of reason to comprehend such magnitude (75, 88). The Arctic sublime recreated in literature represents this magnitude and vastness through its perceived “blankness” and the isolation of the explorer. In this space, there is nothing to interrupt the landscape or place to escape the harsh climate, giving the perception that it continues limitlessly. Within this limitless space of simultaneous pleasure and fear, European identity took on an uncanny nature as they struggled to situate themselves in the landscape (Sand 140). Here, Freud’s theories on the uncanny can help us understand why this resulted in the persistent disquiet of the explorers. While the European was in an unfamiliar environment, they could only attempt to understand the environment through their familiar modes of comprehension. This included European ideologies and desires (such as idealizations of the female and relationships with animals), which when brought into the Arctic climate created familiar imaginings in unfamiliar space. In Freud’s

sense of the uncanny, this resulted in “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (221). Desires for home and the familiar therefore led to the creation of strange, seemingly impossible spaces. This includes, perhaps most strongly, the placement of a paradise in the Arctic.

Our three main texts all speak to an Arctic paradise. Shelley’s Walton enters the Arctic in hope of this paradise, as he writes to his sister that he pursues his journey because of his belief in an Arctic paradise, a region of “beauty and delight . . . there snow and frost are banished; and sailing over a calm sea, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in wonders and in beauty every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe” (49). While Walton does not reach his Arctic paradise, his inclination to risk his life for a myth demonstrates the power of the Arctic imaginary in captivating explores beyond rationality. However, Sand and Verne’s text both imagine this myth to its end, and both expeditions reach their imagined Eden. In this way, the texts ask the question: what happens when we reach this apex of the imaginary?

Sand’s text most obviously discusses this Paradise and its implications. After Alexis’ long journey chasing Laura into the Arctic, he and his uncle finally stumble upon “un Eden” (131) in the heart of the Arctic. Here, the heat of the climate has produced magnificent flora and fauna unlike any creatures Alexis has witnessed. Instantly, Alexis’ colonial mindset is awoken and he begins to imagine the future colonists of the island (137). However, the two men cannot remain in this place that appears to ask “Que faites-vous ici, où l’homme n’est rien et où rien n’est fait pour lui?” (140). Alexis does not immediately abandon his colonial dreams, but as the two men are lured further and further into the Paradise, they come to see that, indeed, they cannot stay. As they pursue the land further, they find nothing to eat or drink and what they had once taken as paradise slowly turns into stone (111). Eventually,

Alexis' uncle succumbs to the landscape, leaving Alexis alone in the world. His guide, Laura, then appears to lead him home. She seems idealized in beauty, and asks Alexis if he would like to remain in the crystalized Pole or return to Europe. As Alexis choses to return home, Laura acknowledges that he has idealized her so that "Tu fais de moi un ange de lumière, un pur esprit, et je ne suis pourtant qu'une bonne petite personne sans prétentions" (153). This is the ultimate choice for Alexis: to return home and marry Laura as she is in her humanity, or remain in the world of unrealized idealizations.

Laura, the embodiment of nature, is revealed to be an idealized version of a woman just as the paradise Alexis found is revealed to be stone. In both senses, Alexis allowed his imagination to idealize the scenario instead of seeing it clearly for what it is. Sand's *Laura* is therefore a meditation on the power of the imagination to produce its innermost desires instead of accurately reflecting reality. As wilderness becomes an idealization of nature and the Arctic imaginary becomes an idealization of a geographical space, Sand walks her readers through the conclusion of these practices. One can eventually choose to see their surroundings as they are, or live forever in an imagined world. However, if we want to truly know a space, we must eventually learn to take it on its own terms.

This is a very similar argument to what Donna Haraway argues for in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Here, Haraway argues for "staying with the trouble" which does not require "a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configuraitons of places, times, matters, meanings" (1). Alexis' journey embodies a search for meaning in the world by attempting to consume more knowledge of its geography, distant places, and secrets. In doing this, he does not "stay with the trouble"

but instead attempts to escape into an imaginary place that literary does “pivot between awful or edenic pasts” (1). This recalls the argument with which we began, that wilderness is an escape out of history, an antidote to civilization. Sand’s text reveals an early acknowledgement of the desire to exit the discomfort found in the increasingly industrialized, urbanized space of nineteenth century Europe. However, instead of disappearing into a distant paradise, we must enter the space of the Chthulucene, “made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of being-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen” (55). Both Sand’s and Haraway’s texts reveal a desire to run away, to fall into the trap of the imaginary that took hold of so many, including the many Arctic explorers lost to history. Instead, we must remain in the discomfort and “stay with the trouble.”

Finally, Verne’s *Hatteras* is a warning of what might occur when one does not turn away from the imaginary. While Verne maintains a strong sense of realism throughout his text, at the novel’s conclusion he finally turns towards an area yet to be explored: the apex of the Pole. While the Eden Verne describes is not as obvious as that described by Sand, the remnants of a myth of a northern paradise can be seen. As the explorers reach closer to the Pole they begin to exhibit harmonious relationships. For example, the closer they get, more idyllic versions of animals as “ces jolis animaux qui couraient, bondissaient et voltigeaient sans défiance; ils se posaient sur les épaules du bon Clawbonny; ils se couchaient à ses pieds . . . ils semblaient faire de leur mieux pour recevoir chez eux ces hôtes inconnus” (369). In this harmony, the party decides not to hunt them but instead enjoys their company. Later, the patriotic rivalry between Hatteras and his American counterpart dissolves, as they decide that “Si le pôle Nord est atteint, n’importe qui l’aura découvert! Pourquoi se rabaisser ainsi et se targuer d’être Américains ou Anglais, quand on peut se vanter d’être hommes!” (376).

Finally, the party reaches the apex of the Pole. Despite their increasing harmony with nature, they do not reach paradise. Instead, they reach a rocky, steep volcano which sits at the point of the Pole. It is here that out of all the texts discussed, the draw of the Arctic imaginary is most clear and powerful. While Captain John Hatteras has, until this point, demonstrated the “boundlessness of the individual spirit” which Lisa Bloom argues made the Arctic so alluring, and which made Hatteras an effective (albeit eccentric) leader, it is at this point that Hatteras’ commitment to the Arctic imaginary takes over his rational self. While the remainder of his crew is content to acknowledge the Pole from below the volcano, Hatteras is adamant about physically reaching the center of the Pole, despite it being “un cratère béant, enflammé!” (444). As he climbs up the volcano, the crew states that “la folie polaire” had finally caught up with him, an indication that Hatteras cannot remove himself from the illusions of his own Arctic dreams of physically reaching the North Pole, despite the lethal implications of doing so. After Hatteras finally reaches the Pole (he is saved last-minute by his American colleague), Hatteras remains unresponsive, despite his physical well-being. As his companions acknowledge, “nous n’avons sauvé que le corps d’Hatteras! Son âme est restée au sommet de ce volcan! Sa raison est morte!” (450).

While Sand’s Alexis made the choice to return to his home, Verne’s Hatteras demonstrates the impact of refusing to recognize illusions and fantasies. In a trade for discovering the true point of the Pole, Hatteras gives over his soul to his Arctic imaginary in a refusal to accept reality. I read this episode as indicative of all the sailors and captains who gave their life for the thrill of discovering the Arctic imaginary for themselves. Take, for example, Franklin, who voyaged into the Arctic numerous times. Witnessing the Arctic for himself was not enough, instead he continued to return in hopes of reaching the Pole, a place of importance only due to the coordinates read on a compass and endowed with cultural

significance. Franklin and many others like Hatteras, eventually gave their lives for this imaginary dream. That Verne had to imagine this episode only further points to the imaginary of the space. Despite continual search for the North Pole throughout the nineteenth century, no one reached it during the century. While Sand imagines the Eden that sits atop the world, the irony Verne points to is evident. The volcano which sits atop the Pole makes it impossible for any explorer to reach the true Pole, despite all the trials and enduring it took to get there. While it was characteristic of the hero in Verne's *roman géographique* to exhibit great ingenuity and the ability to adapt to hostile natural environments (Dupuy 6), in this moment Verne offers a critique of these adventures (or at least the imaginary which fueled them) and the idea that Europeans can simply envision their way to the Pole. In this way, Verne offers a warning of following the Arctic imaginary too far. While Sand ends her text with an acknowledgement of the construction of this space, Verne follows the imaginary through to its deadly end.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The North Pole was finally reached by either Robert Peary on April 21, 1909 or Frederick Cook on April 6, 1908, depending on who you believe—both accounts have been disputed and it was not until April 19, 1968 that a confirmed arrival occurred (Vaughn 243). This rivalry only further comments on the continuation of the Arctic imaginary into the twentieth century. In response to Peary's telegraphed news, presenting the Arctic to America, President Taft responded "I do not know exactly what I could do with it" (Bloom 15). In this quick phrase, Taft exposed the entire struggle of the Arctic imaginary that Verne had foreshadowed—that despite all the lives lost and feats of endurance, reaching the Pole was strangely anti-climactic. Upon finally reaching the goal of so many explorers, it only served to definitively expose the Arctic imaginary. That is, was so much at stake in the



symbolism of reaching the place (nationalism, identity, endurance of the individual) that there wasn't much left to entice public imagination once the mystery of the Arctic had been dissolved through feat of discovery.

The emphasis seen on the Arctic imaginary in nineteenth century European literature therefore demonstrates how the identity of the authors and explorers were challenged when they encountered the unknown. The Arctic imaginary resulted from an attempt to understand relationships within the space, accounting for the various cultural figures and myths that populated the Arctic during this time, all while obscuring the reality of the Arctic and those inhabiting its terrain. As E.G. Wilson points out in *The Spiritual History of Ice*, the imagined beings that Europeans brought into Arctic space result from a loss of familiar distinctions and hierarchies. In evoking these figures, writers hoped to re-establish lost systems. Consequently, the fantastic beings are both “ciphers for the ‘other,’ [and] they are also secretly the ‘same.’ As images of the unfamiliar, they constitute doubles of fear and desire” (151), illuminating that the figures represented both the disquiet of the Arctic and an attempt at its remedy. As with the relationship between the witch and unruly nature, the beings represent both a fear of and desire for the space of the Arctic by implementing familiar, yet frightful, mythologies that allowed Europeans to more readily understand the space of the Arctic.

These stories also represent a yearning for home and a transposal of “home” onto the Arctic space. Most of the explorers (real or fictionalized) did not remain in the Arctic. Even Franklin, who spent many years there, constantly moved around so that there was no one Arctic space that could be called “home.” Home was continually elsewhere, a place to return to, and therefore the Arctic was never taken on its own terms. Instead, it was a place to bring back and made sense of within the European continent. One explorer, American Charles

Francis Hall, lived for seven years with the Inuit including a two-year continuous stretch on Baffin Island. As a result of this, he reported a significantly different experience in the Arctic.<sup>x</sup> The perception of the Arctic as a place to travel to but not remain therefore also significantly hindered the ability to more fully represent the space accurately.

The novels discussed in this paper present the impossibility of actually inhabiting this created space. In each of the novels, the “hero” never reaches their heroic point but instead reaches some rendition of failure. In *Frankenstein* Victor actually dies in pursuit of his goal, while Hatteras loses his mental capacities in Verne’s text. Finally, Sand’s *Laura* is the only text that seems to reach some point of conclusion for the hero, where he is rewarded for giving up his pursuit in favor of returning home to his own life.

This follows Le Guin’s theories presented in “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction” where she presents the novel, especially novels which engage in science fiction pursuits, as deeply unheroic at its roots. Here, she states that science fiction “is a way of trying to describe what is in fact going on, what people actually do and feel, and how people relate to everything else in this vast sack” (154). Le Guin’s theory applied to the Arctic imaginary allows us to envision texts which focus not on the accomplishments of the “heroes” themselves, but instead the position of the subject to a space, the Arctic. What emerges is the Arctic imaginary in all its construction, idealization, and uncanny figures. Following theories of French *écopoétique* and *boréalisme*, the emphasis is not a realistic place, but instead the aesthetics of the location as it is found in literature.

As we have seen through example and through the observations of literary critics, the Arctic of the nineteenth century was a space largely fabricated from the imaginations of European writers and artists. This included idealizations of Arctic space and dreams of nationalism and discovery. It also included the relocation of figures and desires into the

space of the Arctic, resulting in uncanny experiences and a blurring of reality. However, the writers presented here appear self-aware of these imaginings and simultaneously represent the Arctic imaginary while also hinting at its impossibility.

The Arctic continues to remain in the public imagination through representation in the form of scientific data and discussions on climate change. As nineteenth century representations of the Arctic found it difficult to grasp due to the unfamiliar environment, including sea ice and long winters, we are once again struggling to represent an unfamiliar Arctic. However, in the twenty-first century this unfamiliarity arises from a rapidly disappearing Arctic space, where long-familiar seasonal patterns have altered and the Arctic Ocean is increasingly free of sea-ice during the summer months. While nineteenth century explorers could not grasp the Arctic they so ardently desired, the Arctic continues to present its elusiveness as it slowly alters form. How accurately we can represent the Arctic thus becomes an even more pertinent undertaking, as we strive to remember that this disappearing place is not an imaginary space but instead a home which deserves to be understood.

## Notes

<sup>i</sup> The isolation of Inuit communities that early European explorers encountered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflects a change in life for the people of the High Arctic, and is most likely a result of disease brought by Europeans and resettlement, while and the twentieth century saw patterns of relocating indigenous Arctic populations across the globe (McGhee 128, 105-109). It is estimated that the North Atlantic whaling hunts resulted in at least 65,234 bowhead whale deaths between 1661-1800. By the time whaling ceased in the early twentieth century, they were almost extinct and have not yet recovered (Vaughn 95).

<sup>ii</sup> This essay addresses almost exclusively conceptions of the North American Arctic and Greenland, the geographical areas of most interest to nineteenth century European explorers as they sought out the Northwest Passage. Other Arctic spaces, such as Svalbard or Siberia, have their own unique history and would warrant their own individual investigations into the representation of space.

<sup>iii</sup> Whale oil. A medium-sized bowhead whale produces between 20-30 tons of oil. The oil was used as a raw material in soap making, the leather and textile industries, and for lighting oil lamps (Vaughn 77, 85).

<sup>iv</sup> A sun dog is an atmospheric phenomenon that creates a type of halo around the sun with two bright spots on either side. Bellot describes this as “un *halo* (arc en ciel de couleur blanchâtre et uniforme) avec deux parhélies” (65).

<sup>v</sup> Sir Edward Belcher undertook an expedition in search of the lost Franklin expedition during 1852-1854 and at one point abandoned “an entire squadron of Her Majesty’s ships” in Lancaster Sound (Vaughn 159).

<sup>vi</sup> This emphasizes the nationalism behind Arctic discovery, as British whaling vessels were much better equipped for the task, both in construction and through the whalers who were more familiar with Arctic navigation (Vaughn 143).

<sup>vii</sup> This number is minimal when considered against the expeditions sent to look for the lost Franklin crew of 1845, over sixteen in nine years (Vaughn 156).

<sup>viii</sup> The sentiment is echoed in other texts as well, such as James Thomson’s “Rule, Britannia” (1740) as he references the power of British waterways: “All thine shall be the subject main, / And every shore it circles thine” (27-28). Alexander Pope also makes reference to the power of British waterways throughout his “Windsor Forest” (1713) and imagines the Thames running into the ocean, including “Tempt icy seas, where scarce the waters roll, / Where clearer flames glow round the frozen Pole” (387-388).

<sup>ix</sup> Sir James Ross was nephew to Captain John Ross, Hatteras' real-life counterpart

<sup>x</sup> Hall relied heavily on Inuit Traditional Knowledge and attempted to represent the Arctic on its own terms, rather than through the eyes of an Anglophone explorer. For example, he states that "In the Arctic regions one seldom or never hears any remark made with regard to its being cold: this staple topic of conversation is thus entirely lost to the Inuit (Blum 219).

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